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Selections

for the

Piano



Venetian Gondola Song

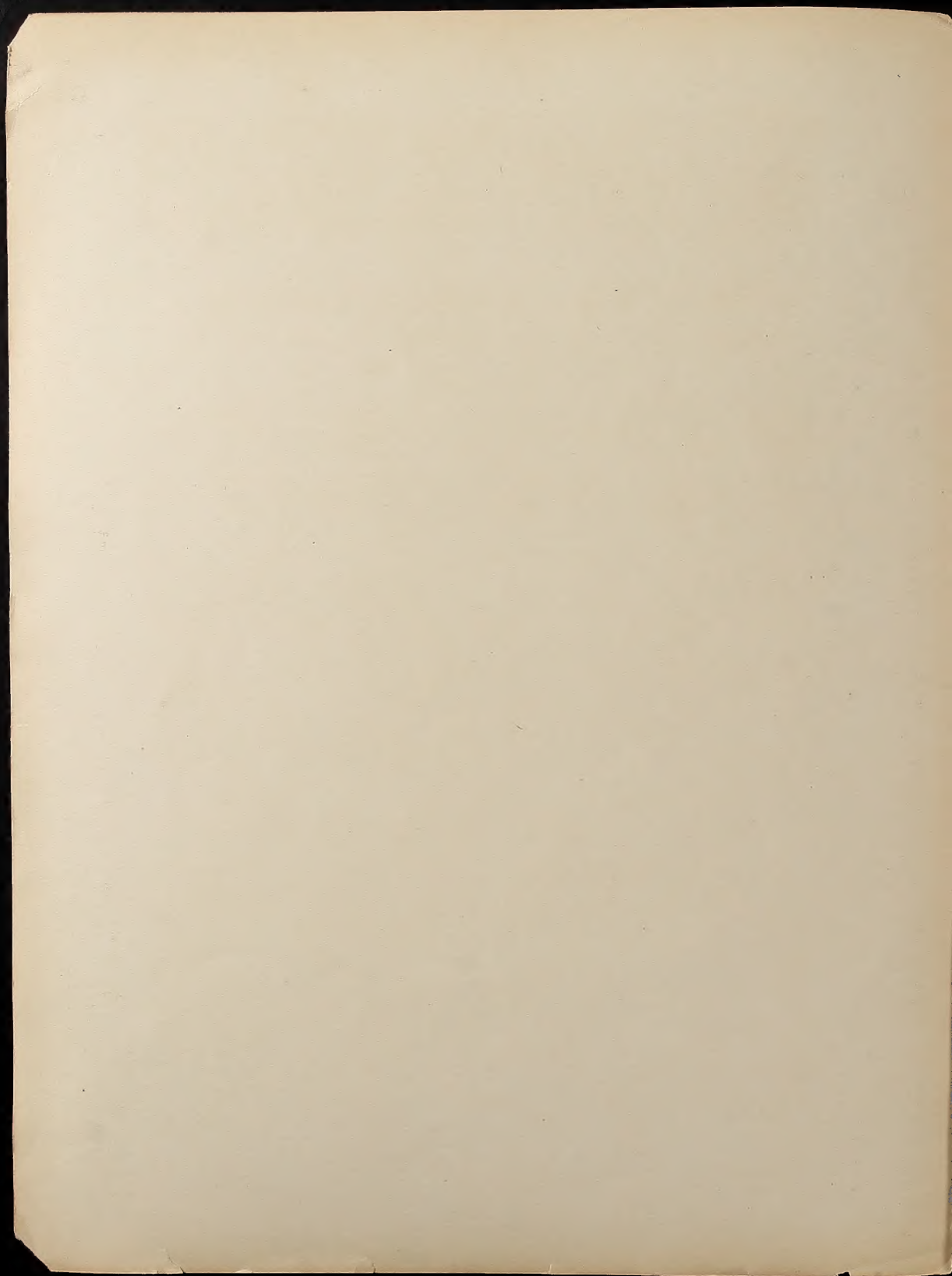
No. 1, Op. 19, No. 6

— MENDELSSOHN

GRADE II—B

No. 30







VENETIAN GONDOLA SONG, NO. 1, OP. 19, NO. 6.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH—JACOB LUDWIG FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY.

Born at Hamburg, February 3d, 1809.
Died at Leipzig, November 4th, 1847.

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MENDELSSOHN was of Jewish extraction, being the grandson of Moses Mendelssohn, the distinguished Jewish philosopher. He knew little of the cares and vexations of life, having been surrounded from his boyhood with all that wealth and refinement could procure. The world owes a great debt of gratitude to this distinguished musician, for besides the legacy of beautiful music which he bequeathed to it, he stimulated and aroused interest in the works of the great Sebastian Bach, by producing his "Passion Music," at Berlin, in 1829; he founded the Leipzig Conservatory of Music, and he was instrumental in bringing several noted musicians to the notice of the world, notably Robert Schumann.

His talent for music developed itself at a very early age, and he was given the benefit of the best instruction which an artistic home and wealthy surroundings could procure. He was the first director of the Leipzig Conservatory of Music, and in 1840, he was appointed director of the department of music of the Academy of Fine Arts at Berlin, founded by the King of Prussia. He traveled extensively on journeys connected with his art, notably to England, where he was beloved and appreciated. He was the personal friend of Goethe and of Queen Victoria of England, who held him in high regard.

He had great facility in composition, and his musical ideas are characterized by elegance and refinement, if they are not always of a profound depth. Symphonies, Operas, Oratorios, Overtures and works for various instruments, flowed from his pen. Among these works must be mentioned the "Midsummer Night's Dream" overture, the oratorio of "Elijah," and the "Songs Without Words" for the piano. These latter compositions have made his name a household word throughout the world; they are, as their names indicate, songs without words; they show a great mastery of form and are for the most part very refined and lovely in their contents. The oratorio of "Elijah" is, with the possible exception of Handel's "Messiah," the greatest Oratorio ever written.

FORM AND STRUCTURE.—The form of this piece is three-part song form. The first seven measures are introductory in character. They contain a motive of the accompaniment and also some slight melodic features and do not really belong to the form of the piece.

The working form of the piece is 6-1, 2, 3, 4, 5. The first period begins with measure 8 and ends in measure 17. It is thus a ten-measure period, the interpolated measures being 14 and 15. This ends the first part of the song form. The second part begins with measure 18 and continues to measure 34. This part has the period ending with measure 25, and then extended through measure 26 to 34. The third part begins with measure 35 where the motive of the first period re-appears, but is not carried out to completion; it is only suggested. The measures from 40 to the end are a *coda*, and are similar to the introductory measures.

This piece is a good illustration of how the proportions or dimensions of the different parts of a form can be altered at the volition of the composer. The parts are very irregular in their dimensions. The real song form here contains 32 measures. An absolutely regular form of this size would show 24 measures, so this form is eight measures longer, and these measures are distributed between the different parts. The first part contains two extra measures, the third part being three measures short, and the middle part being really nine measures longer than the eight-measure period. It is, however, not usual to find a repetition so greatly abbreviated as in the case of this piece, and it was probably done here in order to conform to the character of an uncultivated folk-song.

Ano. 30-2

THE POETIC IDEA.—This piece is a gondola-song. A gondola is a form of boat used to carry passengers in the canals of Venice, where the traffic is mostly by water, because canals take the place of streets very largely, and the boatmen having charge of these boats have certain songs which seem to be characteristic of their calling. Some writers make a distinction between the gondolier's song of Venice and the barcarolle of Naples, the barcarolle being also a boat song.

The music of this piece is in $\frac{6}{8}$ time, and the form of the accompaniment might be taken as indicating the lapping of the waves. The melody itself is characteristic, and like so many folk-songs, is in the minor mode. The gondoliers are very expert in managing their craft, but according to Byron, their singing is falling somewhat into disrepute, for he says:

"In Venice, Tasso's echoes are no more
And silent rows the songless gondolier."

HOW TO STUDY.—The first thing to do is to get the lilt or swing of the accompaniment. The left hand plays the quarter-notes, and then an eighth later, the right hand plays two eighth-notes, the first of which is slurred over to the second. The first of the slurred notes should receive a slight accent, and the second one be played short. After the accompaniment can be played as it should be, then the melody should be studied as we have heretofore pointed out with other pieces, with careful reference to its interpretation, slurs, marks of expression, etc. Then the part for each hand should be practiced by itself.

The skip in measure 7, left hand part, from G up to B \flat -G should be practiced as an exercise and repeated many times. In other places the same thing should happen, and where the right hand plays both melody and accompaniment, do not neglect to bring out the melody in a song-like manner and to phrase the accompaniment according to the slurs, as we have already explained. The sixteenth-notes on the second half of measure 10 are a characteristic ornament that will be found in much of the southern music. They are similar to a slow glide, and should be played with a *crescendo* and with a slight tendency towards a retard. If there are any difficulties in the technical part of this piece, they are to be practiced on the same method that we have applied to the studies; that is, they should be singled out for special practice and exercises made to fit them.

VENETIAN GONDOLA SONG, NO. I.

Edited and Annotated by Frederic Lillebridge.

Mendelssohn, Op. 19, No. 6

Andante sostenuto. (♩. = 58.)

The musical score is written for piano in 8/8 time. It begins with a treble staff and a bass staff. The tempo is 'Andante sostenuto' with a quarter note equal to 58 beats per minute. The score includes various dynamics: *p* (piano), *sf* (sforzando), *dim.* (diminuendo), and *pp* (pianissimo). It also includes articulation marks like 'cantabile' and 'Ra' with asterisks. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. The score is divided into five systems of four measures each, with the final system containing three measures (20-22).

Venetian Gondola Song, No. 1.—2.

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24 25 *p* 26 27

28 29 30 31 *sf*

32 *dim.* 33 *p* 34 *mf* 35 36 *dim.* *pp*

37 38 39 40 *pp* 41

42 43 44 45 46

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